IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-22 (Canceled).

Claim 23 (Currently Amended): A payment system for controlling the continued use of a software program by a user, comprising:

a terminal configured to access software from a computer readable storage communicatively linked thereto, the software ~~configured to generate~~ providing an interface offering continued utilization of the software in exchange for payment from the user, the interface providing at least an identity of the software owner, offer parameters and the digital signature of the owner for at least part of the offer, and configured to generate a first message;

payment means operably linked to the terminal and configured to receive the first message, display the first message, receive a potential acceptance of the software user, compose a second message requesting payment which includes at least the identity of the user and of the software owner together with proof of the user acceptance, and configured to transmit the second message; and

a message and payment processing server configured to receive the second message, verify the existence of the proof of user acceptance, record the payment request with at least the identity of the user and of the software owner and the amount to be paid, credit the owner with the amount to be paid, configured to compose a third message which serves as a payment settlement message, the third message containing at least the identity of the message and payment processing server and a digital signature for proof of payment; and transmitting the third message therefrom,

wherein the payment module is configured to receive the third message for transmission to the interface of the terminal to verify the digital signature for proof of payment relative to the offer parameters of the first message to authorize use of the software.

Claim 24 (Previously Presented): The system in accordance with claim 23, whereby the digital signature of the owner of at least part of the offer, and the digital signature for proof of payment are both public key signatures with certification trees, whereby an authority defines the root of the certification tree containing the system's different participants, notably the software owner and the message and payment processing server, and whereby one or more certificates are attached to the first and third messages for signature checking.

Claim 25 (Previously Presented): The system in accordance with claim 23, whereby the message and payment processing server further comprises:

a remote payment server linked to the payment means by a telecommunications network, and whereby said remote payment server receives and processes the second message and composes and sends the third message; the remote payment server calculates the total consumption of each user for all software owners in order to impose payment by said user and causes the sums owned to each software owner to be transferred by all of the users.

Claim 26 (Previously Presented): The system in accordance with claim 23, whereby the message and payment processing server further comprises:

secure means containing at least the identity of the user; said means are additionally able to receive the second message, check the proof of the user acceptance, record the payment request and compose the third message, payment settlement, transfer the third message, and also includes a remote payment server able to credit the software owner.

Claim 27 (Currently Amended): The system in accordance with claim 26, whereby the secure means include a smart card reader with a smart card containing the user's identity, and whereby the reader and card are able to receive the second message, check the proof of the user acceptance, record the payment request and compose the third message, ~~perform~~ payment settlement, ~~and provide the third message~~ with the proof of payment.

Claim 28 (Previously Presented): The system in accordance with claim 27, whereby the card is of a prepay type and contains a balance and whereby the card is able to debit the balance with the request amount at each payment request.

Claim 29 (Previously Presented): The system in accordance with claim 28, whereby the prepay card message is able to insert into the third message proof that the requested amount has been debited from the card.

Claim 30 (Currently Amended): The system in accordance with claim 28, whereby the prepay card is able to build a file containing settled requests and corresponding amounts, and whereby a payment settlement message is only sent with a corresponding digital signature once this file has been updated.

Claim 31 (Previously Presented): The system in accordance with claim 30, whereby the prepay card can be topped up, and whereby the file is first transferred to the remote payment server during the topping-up process, for transferring funds to the software owners.

Claim 32 (Previously Presented): The system in accordance with claim 28, whereby the prepay card is of the electronic wallet type.

Claim 33 (Previously Presented): The system in accordance with claim 27, whereby the card is of the post-pay type.

Claim 34 (Currently Amended): The system in accordance with claim 33, whereby the post-pay card builds a file containing settled requests and corresponding amounts, and whereby [[a]] the payment settlement message is only sent with its digital signature once this file has been updated.

Claim 35 (Previously Presented): A system in accordance with claim 34, whereby the file is transferred to the remote payment server for transferring funds to the software owners.

Claim 36 (Previously Presented): A payment method for controlling continued use of a software program by a user, comprising:

generating a payment request of the software in the form of an interface during processing of the software at a terminal;

offering use of the software via a first message of the interface, the first message; containing at least identity of the software owner, offer parameters and the owner's digital signature for at least part of the offer, and transmission of the said first message to a payment module of the terminal;

reception and display by the payment module of said first message;

reception by the payment module of the potential acceptance of the user; and,

composition by the payment module of a second message requesting payment, following the user acceptance, containing at least identity of the user and of the software owner together with proof that the user accepts the offer;

transmission by said module of said second message to processing means of message and payment;

reception by the payment module of a third message, which is a payment settlement message, from the processing means of message and payment; the third message containing at least the identity of the processing means of message and payment and a digital signature constituting proof of payment;

transmission by the payment module of said third message to the software interface;

verifying by the software interface of the digital signature constituting proof of payment against the offer parameters contained in the first message and

authorization of continuation of the use of the software program upon verification.

Claim 37 (Previously Presented): A terminal for enabling control of the continued use of a software program the terminal comprises:

transmission means for transmitting a payment request from the software to an interface thereof during processing of the software;

processing means for composing by the software interface a first message offering use of the software; said first message containing at least identity of the software owner, offer parameters and the digital signature of the owner for at least part of the offer,

transmission means for transmitting the first message to the payment module;

receiving means for receiving the of said first message by the payment module,

display means for displaying the first message;

reception means of the payment module for receiving the potential acceptance of the user;

constituting means of the payment module for constituting a second message requesting payment, containing at least the identity of the user and of the software owners together with proof that the user accepts the offer;

transmission means for sending said second message from payment module to processing means of message and payment;

reception means of the payment module for receiving a third message, which is a payment settlement message, from the processing means of message and payment; the third message containing at least the identity of the processing means of message and payment and a digital signature constituting proof of payment;

transmission means for resending by the payment module said third message to the software interface;

verifying means for verifying by the software interface digital signature constituting proof of payment against the offer parameters contained in the first message;

authorization means for authorizing continuation of the use of the software program in case of verification.